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ABSTRACT

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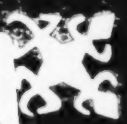

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CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON EDUCATION, DIVERSITY & EXCELLENCE (CREDE)

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Abstract

This report examines factors that must be considered in the development of effective educational programs that serve Hispanic students. The educational crisis facing Hispanic students has been discussed at length at local, state, regional, and national levels, and a number of reports have documented the problems confronting these students. This report provides a synthesis of the research on the education of Hispanic students, summarizing these problems and suggesting possible solutions for approaching them. The report is divided into five sections. The first section discusses factors in the education of Hispanics. The second highlights the educational status of Hispanic students in the United States. The third section examines factors associated with the underachievement of Hispanic students, with particular focus on the following: (a) the lack of qualified teachers to teach them, (b) the use of inappropriate teaching practices, and (c) at-risk school environments. The fourth section spotlights factors associated with the success of Hispanic students and provides a brief summary of instructional strategies and programs that have been found to significantly improve their achievement in school, and the fifth examines how current knowledge of such practices and programs can inform educational policy and practice regarding teacher education and professional development and guide future research.

Introduction

The education of Hispanic[1] students in the United States has reached a crisis stage. Although the number of Hispanic students attending public schools has increased dramatically in recent decades, Hispanic students as a group have the lowest level of education and the highest dropout rate of any group of students. Conditions of poverty and health, as well as other social problems have made it difficult for Hispanics living in the United States to improve their educational status. Consequently, one of the most pressing national educational priorities has been to close the achievement gap between Hispanic and White students (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). The purpose of this report is to examine factors that must be considered in the development of effective instructional practices for Hispanic students.

The educational crisis facing Hispanic students has been discussed at length at local, state, regional, and national levels, and a number of reports have documented the problems confronting these students. This report summarizes these problems and suggests possible solutions for approaching them. The report is divided into five sections. The first section discusses factors in the education of Hispanics. The second highlights the educational status of Hispanic students in the United States. The third section examines factors associated with the underachievement of Hispanic students, with particular focus on the following:

1. the lack of qualified teachers to teach these students,
2. the use of inappropriate teaching practices, and
3. at-risk school environments.

The fourth section spotlights factors associated with the success of Hispanic students and provides a brief summary of instructional strategies and programs that have been found to significantly improve their achievement in school. The fifth examines how current knowledge of such practices and programs can inform educational policy and practice regarding teacher education and professional development and guide future research.

Factors in the Education of Hispanics

One basic educational premise is that all children can learn. There are cultural and historical practices, however, that have placed Hispanic children at risk for educational failure. Recent research has emphasized the importance of understanding the impact these cultural-historical factors have on children's educational success. This is a move from earlier research that suggested the home environment was responsible for students' failure in school. For example, in the past, inferior academic achievement among African American, Hispanic, and American Indian populations was interpreted by some as the result of deprivation in the home environment (Schneider & Lee, 1990). By focusing on cultural-historical context, researchers have shifted to a more positive interpretation of the home environment, taking into account the funds of knowledge—the collective knowledge found among social networks of households that thrive through the reciprocal exchange of resources (Gonzalez, Moll, Floyd-Tenery, Rivera, Rendon, Gonzales, Amanti, 1993)—that are available within the students' home and community. These funds of knowledge encompass the practical and intellectual knowledge gained through participation in household and community activity. These elements are essential to our understanding of what kind of educational experiences lead to educational success among Hispanic students (Goldenberg, Reese, & Gallimore, 1992).

Educational Status of Hispanic Students in the United States

Hispanic students currently make up 15% of the elementary school-age population and will comprise nearly 25% of the total school-age population by the year 2025. Over the past 20 years, the enrollment of Hispanics in public elementary schools has increased over 150%, compared to 20% for African American students and 10% for White students (U.S. Department of Education, 2000).

The U.S. Hispanic population is very diverse; there is great variability among Hispanic students in terms of their countries of birth, primary language skills, prior educational experiences, and socioeconomic status (E. E. García, 2001; Peregoy & Boyle, 2000). According to the 2000 U.S. census (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000), 66% of Hispanics were of Mexican origin, 14% were of Central and South American origin, 9% were of Puerto Rican origin, and 5% were of Cuban origin. The remaining 6% were designated as "other Hispanics." Hispanic students also have multifarious academic and social needs. Nearly half (46%) live in metropolitan areas, compared to non-Hispanic Whites (21%). Hispanics constitute about 75% of all students enrolled in programs for the limited English proficient (LEP), including bilingual education and English as a second language (ESL) programs.

In terms of educational achievement, the 1996 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1996) scores for 17-year-old Hispanic students were well below those of their White peers in mathematics, reading, and science. The dropout rate for Hispanic students was also much higher than that of other ethnic groups. The high school completion rate for Hispanics was 63%, compared to 81% for African American and 90% for White students. In 1998, 30% of all Hispanic 16- through 24-year-olds were school dropouts (1.5 million)—more than double the dropout rate for African Americans (14%) and more than three times the rate for Whites (8%). Only 63% of Hispanic kindergartners go on to graduate from high school. Only 32% of Hispanics enroll in college, and of that 32%, only 10% graduate. These percentages are significantly lower than those for White and African American kindergartners. Hispanic children under age 5 are less likely to be enrolled in early childhood education programs than African American or White children. This is a gap that continues to widen for Hispanic students. In 1998, for example, only 20% of Hispanic 3-year-olds were enrolled in early childhood programs, compared to 42% of Whites and 44% of African Americans.

In addition to the problems of underachievement and low educational attainment, many Hispanic students live in households and communities that experience high and sustained poverty. About 35% of Hispanic children (18 years of age or younger) live in poverty. Hispanic students also attend schools where more than twice as many of their classmates are poor, compared to those attended by White students (46% vs. 19%). Hispanic students reside primarily in urban areas and are immersed in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty where the most serious educational problems exist (García, 1994). Schools with high concentrations of poor students, for example, tend to be poorly maintained, structurally unsound, fiscally underfunded, and staffed with large numbers of uncertified teachers (G. N. García, 2001). Furthermore, classrooms that serve predominantly Hispanic students often lack the technology to adequately meet the needs of students.

The sociohistorical factors discussed above contribute to the complexity of issues that Hispanic students face in their quest for educational success and exemplify the seriousness of the problems that challenge Hispanic students in general. The following section discusses critical educational factors related to the underachievement of Hispanic students.

Factors Associated with the Underachievement of Hispanic Students

Some educators have argued that the most serious barriers to achievement among Hispanic students are the lack of funding for programs that address their educational needs, or political opposition to programs that focus on linguistically diverse students (Melendez, 1993). However, there are several alterable factors that have been found to contribute to the underachievement of Hispanic students. This section examines three critical factors that are related to the underachievement of Hispanic students, including the lack of qualified teachers to teach them, inappropriate instructional practices, and at-risk school environments.

Lack of Qualified Teachers

One of the most serious problems associated with the educational failure of Hispanic students results from a shortage of adequately qualified teachers and a lack of appropriate preparation among credentialed teachers (Menken & Holmes, 2000). Teachers of Hispanic English language learning students (ELLs), for example, are challenged with teaching traditional academic content to students who are in the process of acquiring a second language (Gersten & Jiménez, 1997). At present, nearly 56% of all public school teachers in the United States have at least one ELL student in their class, but less than 20% of these teachers are certified ESL or bilingual teachers (Alexander, Heaviside, & Farris, 1999). In urban areas where most ELLs attend school, over 80% of the 54 largest urban school districts reported that they had non-credentialed teachers on their staff (Urban Teacher Collaborative, 2000). This suggests that the number of teachers prepared to teach Hispanic ELLs falls far short of the tremendous need for such teachers.

In a recent profile showing the quality of U.S. teachers, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (Lewis et al., 1999) found that most teachers of ELLs or other culturally diverse students did not feel that they were prepared to meet the needs of their students. In another recent national survey of classroom teachers, 57% of all teachers responded that they either very much needed or somewhat needed more information on helping students with limited English proficiency achieve to high standards (Alexander et al., 1999). Alternative forms of teacher preparation and teacher staff development are being implemented by local school districts to meet the needs of ELLs, but they have generally not been effective (García, 1994; Lewis et al., 1999).

Inappropriate Teaching Practices

Another urgent problem related to the underachievement of Hispanic students has to do with current teaching practices. The most common instructional approach found in schools that serve Hispanic students is the direct instructional model. In this approach, teachers typically teach to the whole class at the same time and control all of the classroom discussion and decision-making (Haberman, 1991; Padrón & Waxman, 1993). This teacher-directed instructional model emphasizes lecture, drill and practice, remediation, and student seatwork, consisting mainly of worksheets (Stephen, Varble, & Taitt, 1993). Some researchers have argued that these instructional practices constitute a "pedagogy of poverty" (Haberman, 1991; Waxman, Huang, & Padrón, 1995), because they focus on low-level skills and passive instruction.

Several studies have examined classroom instruction for Hispanic students and found that this pedagogy of poverty orientation exists in many classrooms with Hispanics, ELLs, and other minority students (Padrón & Waxman, 1993; Waxman, Huang, & Padrón, 1995). In a large scale study examining the classroom instruction of 90 teachers from 16 inner-city middle schools serving predominantly Hispanic students, Waxman, Huang, and Padrón (1995) found that students were typically involved in whole-class instruction, which allowed little time for interaction with the teacher or other students. About two-thirds of the time, for example, students were not involved in verbal interaction with either their teacher or other students. There were very few small group activities. Students rarely selected their own instructional activities and were generally very passive in the classroom, often just watching or listening to the teacher, even though they were found to be on task about 94% of the time.

In another study examining mathematics and science instruction in inner-city middle-school classrooms serving Hispanic students, Padrón and Waxman (1993) found that science teachers participated in whole-class instruction about 93% of the time, while mathematics teachers participated in whole-class instruction about 55% of the time. Students in mathematics classes worked independently about 45% of the time, while there was no independent work observed in science classes. In mathematics classes, no small group work was observed; in science classes, students worked in small groups only 7% of the time. Questions about complex issues were not raised by any of the mathematics or science teachers. Furthermore, teachers seldom (4% of the time) posed open-ended questions for students in science classes; they never posed these questions in mathematics classes.

The results of these and other studies illustrate that classroom instruction in schools comprised predominantly of Hispanic students often tends to be whole-class instruction with students working in teacher-assigned and teacher-generated activities, generally in a passive manner (i.e., watching or listening). In these classrooms, teachers also spend more time explaining things to students than questioning, cueing, or prompting them to respond. Teachers are not frequently observed encouraging extended student responses or encouraging students to help themselves or each other. In summary, research has suggested that inappropriate instructional practices or pedagogically-induced learning problems may account for the poor academic performance and low motivation of many Hispanic students (Fletcher & Cardona-Morales, 1990).

At-Risk School Environments

Bronfenbrenner (1979) created a paradigm shift that addressed the concerns of child development and educational success in the context of the family and the surrounding ecology that can aptly be applied to issues related to the limited academic success of Hispanic students. In this context, at-risk factors are analyzed as socio-historical events that have created the at-risk conditions for each child and family in a given social context. The term "at-risk school environment" suggests that it is the school rather than the individual student that should be considered at risk. By attending schools that are poorly maintained, in addition to having teachers who are not qualified, Hispanic students are learning in a school environment that can be qualified as at-risk. Alternative strategies or approaches for reforming schools call for changing the circumstances under which children attend school, rather than changing the children. Educators have begun to argue that school systems, school programs, and organizational and institutional features of the school environment contribute to the conditions that influence students' academic success or failure (Kagan, 1990; Waxman, 1992; Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, & Fernandez, 1989).

Several studies have found that many features of schools and classrooms are alienating and consequently drive students out of school rather than keep them engaged (Kagan, 1990; Newman, 1989). Sinclair and Ghory (1987) maintained that it is the school environment that either encourages or discourages student learning through a series of interactions. Waxman (1992) identified several characteristics of an "at risk environment," including the following:

- alienation of students and teachers,
- inferior standards and low quality of education,
- low expectations of students,
- high noncompletion rates for students,
- classroom practices that are unresponsive to students' learning needs,
- high truancy and disciplinary problems, and
- inadequate preparation of students for the future.

Hispanic students who attend these at-risk schools merit our special attention, because if we can alter their learning environment it may be possible to improve both their education and their overall chances for success in society (Waxman, 1992).

One goal of this section has been to suggest that the factors associated with underachievement are changeable, and that even the slightest positive changes in these areas may significantly improve teaching and learning conditions for Hispanic students. The following section summarizes some of the factors associated with the educational success of Hispanic students.

Factors Associated With the Educational Success of Hispanic Students

Educators concerned with the schooling of Hispanic students have generally focused on the development of language skills. Recently, however, researchers have begun to investigate other critical issues, such as improving classroom instruction (Padrón & Waxman, 1999; Tharp, Estrada, Dalton, & Yamauchi, 2000) and developing effective programs in schools with predominantly Hispanic students (Slavin & Calderón, 2001; Slavin & Madden, 2001). This section examines effective teaching practices and successful programs for Hispanic students. It is important to note that effective practices for at-risk students are also beneficial to highly successful students.

Effective Teaching Practices for Hispanic Students

Many educators have maintained that the best way to improve the education of Hispanic students is to provide them with better teachers and classroom instruction (Padrón & Waxman, 1999; Tharp, Estrada, Dalton, & Yamauchi, 2000; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). To determine which practices are most effective, educators need to focus on research-based instructional practices that have been found to be effective with Hispanic students. The consensus across research on instructional practices has been that education needs to be meaningful and responsive to students' needs, as well as linguistically and culturally appropriate (Tharp, 1997; Tharp et al., 2000). Instruction must specifically address the concerns of Hispanic students who come from different cultures and who often are trying to learn a new language. Tharp and Gallimore (1988) provide a definition of teaching that best describes the conditions for learning successfully. In their words, teaching is assisting the performance of students through the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (p. 31), or the distance between the child's individual capacity and her capacity to perform with the assistance of others (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). The relevance of the ZPD to teaching practices lies in the

notion that learning and development occur through assisted performance in the home and community environment as well as in the classroom. This neo-Vygotskian perspective finds much of its support in the educational literature on the development of effective reform programs, as well as in the developmental psychology literature on child development and socialization (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988).

Padrón and Waxman (1995) maintained that there are effective teaching practices that may benefit Hispanic students. They suggested five in particular that have been successful for teaching Hispanic students (Padrón & Waxman, 1999; Waxman & Padrón, 1995; Waxman, Padrón, & Arnold, 2001). These research-based instructional practices include the following: culturally-responsive teaching, cooperative learning, instructional conversations, cognitively-guided instruction, and technology-enriched instruction. Each of these teaching practices is highlighted below.

Culturally-Responsive Teaching

Culturally-responsive teaching emphasizes the everyday concerns of students, such as important family and community issues, and works to incorporate these concerns into the curriculum. Culturally-responsive instruction helps students prepare themselves for meaningful social roles in their community and the larger society by emphasizing both social and academic responsibility. It addresses the promotion of racial, ethnic, and linguistic equality as well as an appreciation of diversity (Boyer, 1993). Culturally-responsive instruction does the following:

- improves the acquisition and retention of new knowledge by working from students' existing knowledge base,
- improves self-confidence and self-esteem by emphasizing existing knowledge,
- increases the transfer of school-taught knowledge to real-life situations, and
- exposes students to knowledge about other individuals or cultural groups (Rivera & Zehler, 1991).

When teachers develop learning activities based on familiar concepts, they facilitate literacy and content learning and help Hispanic students feel more comfortable and confident with their work (Peregoy & Boyle, 2000).

Cooperative Learning

McLaughlin and McLeod (1996) describe cooperative learning as an effective instructional approach that stimulates learning and helps students come to complex understandings through opportunities to discuss and defend their ideas with others. One commonly accepted definition of cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups that enable students to work together to maximize their own learning as well as that of others in the group (Johnson & Johnson, 1991, p. 292). Instead of lecturing and transmitting material, teachers facilitate the learning process by encouraging cooperation among students (Bejarano, 1987). This teaching practice is student-centered and creates an interdependence among students and the teacher (Rivera & Zehler, 1991).

As an instructional practice, cooperative grouping influences Hispanic students in several different ways. Cooperative grouping can be credited with doing the following:

- providing opportunities for students to communicate with each other,
- enhancing instructional conversations,
- decreasing anxiety,
- developing social, academic, and communication skills,
- boosting self-confidence and self-esteem through individual contributions and achievement of group goals,

- improving individual and group relations by learning to clarify, assist, and challenge others' ideas, and
- developing proficiency in English by providing students with rich language experiences that integrate speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Calderón, 1991; Christian, 1995; Rivera & Zehler, 1991).

Furthermore, cooperative learning activities provide Hispanic students with the skills that are necessary to function in real-life situations, such as the utilization of context for meaning, the seeking of support from others, and the comparing of nonverbal and verbal cues (Alcala, 2000, p. 4).

Instructional Conversations

Instructional conversations provide students with opportunities for extended dialogue in areas that have educational value as well as relevance for them (August & Hakuta, 1998). The instructional conversation is an extended discourse between the teacher and students. It is initiated by students to develop their language and complex thinking skills, and to guide them in their learning processes (Tharp, 1995).

August and Hakuta's (1998) comprehensive review of research found that effective teachers of Hispanic students provide their students with opportunities for extended dialogue. Rather than limiting expectations for Hispanic students by avoiding discussion during instruction, instructional conversations emphasize dialogue with teachers and classmates (Durán, Dugan, & Weffer, 1997). Often, Hispanic students do not have control of the English language, which may prevent them from participating in classroom discussions. Thus, one of the major benefits of using instructional conversations with Hispanic students who are learning English is that they are designed to provide students with the opportunity for extended discourse, an important principle of second language learning (Christian, 1995).

Cognitively-Guided Instruction

Cognitively-guided instruction emphasizes the development of learning strategies that enhance students' metacognitive development. It focuses on the direct teaching and modeling of cognitive learning strategies. Through explicit instruction in learning strategies, students learn how to learn and know when to tap various strategies to accelerate their acquisition of English or academic content. Essentially, students learn how to monitor their own learning (Padrón & Knight, 1989; Waxman, Padrón, & Knight, 1991). This instructional approach can be very beneficial for the large number of Hispanic students who are not doing well in school, because once they learn how to use cognitive strategies effectively, some of the individual barriers to academic success may be removed.

One example of cognitively-guided instruction is reciprocal teaching, a procedure in which students are instructed in four specific comprehension-monitoring strategies:

1. summarizing,
2. self-questioning,
3. clarifying, and
4. predicting.

Studies on reciprocal teaching have found that these cognitive strategies can successfully be taught to Hispanic students, and that the use of these strategies increases reading achievement (Padrón, 1992, 1993). Another example of cognitively-guided instruction is Chamot and O'Malley's (1987) instructional program for LEP students that focuses specifically on strategy instruction. They found that when cognitive learning strategies are modeled for the student and opportunities to practice the strategy are provided, learning outcomes improve.

Technology-Enriched Instruction

Several studies have found that technology-based instruction is effective for Hispanic students (Cummins & Sayers, 1990; Padrón & Waxman, 1996). Web-based picture libraries, for example, can promote Hispanic students' comprehension in content-area classrooms (e.g., science and mathematics) (Smolkin, 2000). Furthermore, some types of technology (e.g., multimedia) are effective for Hispanic students, because they help students connect learning in the classroom to real-life situations, thereby creating a meaningful context for teaching and learning (Means & Olson, 1994). In addition, multimedia technology can be especially helpful for Hispanic students, because it can facilitate auditory skill development by integrating visual presentations with sound and animation (Bermúdez & Palumbo, 1994).

Digitized books are also available, allowing Hispanic students to request pronunciations for unknown words, request translations of sections, and ask questions (Jiménez & Barrera, 2000). Another area that holds promise for improving the teaching and learning of Hispanic students is the use of computer networks and telecommunications.

These teaching practices incorporate more active student learning and are more student-centered. Instead of delivering knowledge, teachers are facilitators of learning (Padrón & Waxman, 1999). Glickman (1998) referred to this approach as democratic pedagogy, describing it as instruction that respects the students' desire to know, discuss, problem solve, and explore individually and with others, rather than learning that is dictated, determined, and answered by the teacher (p. 52). These student-centered instructional practices represent a model of classroom instruction that has not been very common for Hispanic students or Hispanic ELLs (Glickman, 1998; Padrón & Waxman, 1999).

Effective Communities and School-Based Programs for Hispanic Students

In general, there are three conditions that need to be met for any educational program or intervention to be effective:

1. there must be a sense of community in the classroom,
2. there must be student and community empowerment, and
3. prevention or intervention programs must be based on the co-constructed educational goals of the group for which the intervention is being designed (O'Donnell, Tharp, & Wilson, 1993).

Several programs aimed at improving the effectiveness of schooling for Hispanic students exemplify some of these elements.

Creating a Sense of Classroom Community

Any program that allows the co-construction of educational activities and knowledge in the classroom can significantly improve a classroom learning environment (O'Donnell, Tharp, & Wilson, 1993). Co-construction refers to shared meaning within an activity in which, through a joint process, previous social or historical experiences are used to teach new subject matter. The Hispanic Dropout Project, for example, recommends that it is important for Hispanic students and their families to be treated fairly and with respect (Lockwood & Secada, 1999). This respect includes the development of curricula that are relevant to Hispanic students and that convey high expectations (Mehan, 1996). The co-construction of knowledge between teacher and students helps provide a sense of classroom community, as well as ensures that instruction is relevant to students' previous knowledge (Wells & Chang-Wells, 1992).

Hispanic students need to be assured that they are important, and that they can make valuable contributions to society. When students are not given opportunities to participate in the development of classroom activities and when their involvement in discussions is minimized, the implicit message is that teachers do not care about their experiences or what they have to say. For this reason, students may miss out on the type of classroom discourse that encourages them to make sense of new concepts and information.

Student and Community Empowerment

To empower students, schools must first respect and empower their students' communities and families. Hispanic parents should be provided with opportunities to participate in school activities that are connected to their community context. They should also be provided with ongoing information regarding their children's performance in school. Contrary to stereotypes that Hispanic parents are not interested in their children's education, research has shown that Hispanic families value learning and seek to support their children in school (August & Hakuta, 1998). Delgado-Gaitan (1991), for example, found that parents of ethnically and linguistically diverse students participate in school in numbers comparable to other majority group parents. However, she also found that they do not participate in ways that improve the process of instructional delivery, because they are subject to school administrators' and other school personnels' beliefs about the roles that parents should play in schools and the possible contributions that parental involvement brings to the school setting. The roles allotted for parent involvement are often restricted to bake sales and clean-up activities, for example. It is important that parents are given opportunities to participate in meaningful activities that can improve instruction. They may have skills or experiences that are useful to a particular topic being studied, or they can contribute by discussing topics that provide new knowledge and information to students.

Hispanic students have indicated that their parents and families want them to aspire to a better life than they have had. Gallimore, Reese, Balzano, Benson, and Goldenberg (1991), for example, reported that most Latino parents hold relatively high aspirations and expectations for their children. They found that 80% of the families surveyed hoped their children would receive a university degree, yet only 44% expected that their children would. This distinction between aspiration and expectation can be considered here in light of the social, historical, and economic circumstances that may contribute to lower expectations for educational success among Hispanic families, such as limited resources or a negative societal and political atmosphere toward Hispanic immigrants.

School-Based Intervention Programs

In recent years, a number of school-based prevention and intervention programs have proven effective for Hispanic students. A common aim of these programs has been to organize and restructure learning activities to address the goals of the community. This, however, requires creating a sense of community among participants and empowering those who historically have been disenfranchised. Interventions need to occur in specific social and cultural contexts, accounting for components such as the meaning of the intervention, the relevance and appropriateness of the specific intervention, the validity of the constructs involved with the particular population, and cultural and contextual factors that influence the durability of the intervention over time (West, Aiken, & Todd, 1993).

Successful Programs

Success for All (SFA)

SFA is one of the largest comprehensive reform programs for elementary schools serving students at risk of academic failure. The program's philosophy is that children must succeed academically, and that it is possible to provide school personnel with the skills and strategies that they need to ensure academic success for students. A key goal of the program is that students must be able to read at grade level by the end of third grade. Therefore, SFA is an intervention that begins early in students' academic lives. It utilizes a great deal of tutoring, which takes place in 20-minute blocks and is done by certified teachers. Student progress is monitored on an ongoing basis. The program also includes a reading component for students whose native language is Spanish. Evaluations of SFA have indicated that the program has demonstrated consistent positive results for Hispanic students (Lockwood, 2001; Slavin & Madden, 2001).

Reading Recovery/Descubriendo La Lectura

Another program that has been effective for Hispanic students is the Reading Recovery or Descubriendo La Lectura program (Fashola, Slavin, Calderón, & Durán, 2001). This is an early intervention tutoring program that focuses on the lowest achieving readers in the first grade (Pinnell, 1989). Students receive one-on-one tutoring for 30 minutes a day for 12-20 weeks. There are no prescribed books in the program. Tutors are certified teachers who have received one year of training in Reading Recovery. The teacher first gets to know a student and then determines the student's reading difficulties. Later, the teacher employs more structured activities, including reading familiar stories, writing a message, or reading a new book (Escamilla, 1994).

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Project (VYP)

This program has been an effective intervention for older Hispanic students (Lockwood, 2001). It is for students in middle and high school who are at risk of dropping out. Students who are selected to be in the program become tutors for elementary school students who are at least four grade levels below them in school. The tutors, under the supervision of the elementary school teacher and the VYP coordinator, work with the elementary school students 4 days a week. On the fifth day, the tutors participate in a class that strengthens their academic skills, as well as their skills as a tutor. The tutors receive a small stipend for their participation in the program.

The Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)

Another successful program for older Hispanic students (Grades 6-12), AVID places low-achieving students believed to have college potential in the same college preparatory courses as high-achieving students. AVID students receive special counseling, tutoring, and other academic support, such as instruction in study skills, writing, and test-taking strategies. A comprehensive team of administrators, counselors, AVID teachers, and regular content-area teachers who work with AVID students also receive one week of training in the summer and monthly follow-up training during the school year on the teaching practices (e.g., cooperative learning, inquiry-based practices) that are highlighted in the program. AVID has been successful in empowering students by reconnecting them to school. College enrollment rates and graduation rates for AVID students have dramatically increased as a result of the program (Mehan, Villanueva, Hubbard, & Lintz, 1996).

Syntheses of research on effective school-based programs for Hispanic students have found that there are several characteristics common to successful programs (Fashola, Slavin, Calderón, & Durán, 2001; Lockwood, 2001). Effective programs typically do the following:

- have well-specified goals,
- provide ample opportunity for teacher professional development,
- begin early and are maintained throughout the schooling experience,
- include ongoing assessment and feedback,
- incorporate the use of tutors and other support staff, and
- focus on the quality of implementation.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The research cited in this report indicates that there are several instructional practices and programs that significantly improve the academic success of Hispanic students. Many of these programs are supported by systematic, long-term studies and reviews of research. It is important to note that even if only a few factors associated with students' educational success are present, the programs appear to have a positive effect on student achievement and persistence in school. What would happen if most effective practices associated with students' academic achievement were implemented in the classroom? Changes in school practices need to be accompanied by changes in policy that reflect the diversity in classroom settings. The following section focuses on the changes that must occur in educational policy and practice regarding teacher education and professional development. It also discusses implications for further research.

Implications for Preservice Teacher Education

Research on teacher education has suggested that teacher educational programs should do the following:

- provide a knowledge base about the cognitive and affective processes that influence learning,
- include information about general and domain-specific metacognitive strategies to effectively address the needs of students of differing abilities and backgrounds,
- encourage preservice teachers to "think aloud" during explanations so that they can learn to model metacognitive thinking for their students, and
- focus on learner-centered instructional approaches (Presidential Task Force on Psychology in Education, 1993).

In order to carry out such changes, prospective teachers need to be given more opportunities to learn how to restructure classroom environments. Furthermore, prospective teachers should be included as active participants and collaborators in the training process (Gallimore & Goldenberg, 1992).

Implications for Professional Development

The professional development of teachers needs to be seriously addressed in order to improve the education of Hispanic students (Jiménez & Barrera, 2000). Whereas most teacher professional development in schools lasts a day or less, many teachers report that they need long-term professional development to be able to use new methods of classroom instruction (e.g., cooperative grouping), integrate educational technology in the subject they teach, and address the needs of ELLs and other students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Lewis et al., 1999). Classroom teachers want more information related to the teaching of Hispanic students, time for training and planning, and opportunities to collaborate and learn from other teachers. Research has shown that professional development approaches are more successful when they aim to enhance and expand a teacher's repertoire of instructional strategies rather than radically alter them (Gersten & Woodward, 1992; Richardson, 1990; Smylie, 1988). Reforms that simply add work to an already crowded teaching schedule and that are not perceived by teachers as helpful in meeting their teaching goals will be rejected (Mehan, 1991).

Implications for Research

The seriousness of the educational plight of Hispanic students from disadvantaged backgrounds underscores the urgency of developing a solid knowledge base on effective teaching, learning, leadership, and policy that focuses on alterable practices that may improve the academic achievement of these students. Several federally-funded research and development centers are currently conducting and have completed systematic, long-term studies and reviews of research that have made vital contributions to the field. These centers include the Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE); the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk (CRESPAR); the North Central Regional Laboratory; and the Mid-Atlantic Laboratory for Student Success. Syntheses of these studies will contribute greatly to our knowledge base and promote the use of procedural knowledge in policy formation and instructional practice. It will assist by creating a system of research-based educational reform that helps bring what works to scale. The difficulties encountered by Hispanic students in their quest for educational success point to the essential need for synthesizing existing research on Hispanic students and other ELLs and advocating ways to improve their academic achievement. There is a great need to disseminate this type of knowledge directly to schools and school districts in user-friendly ways.

Summary

This report has described research-based approaches to school improvement that have been successful in improving the education of Hispanic students. Several key components that have been successful in many different settings are discussed, but these components are to be viewed only as suggestions and not recipes for improving schools. No program, however well implemented, will prove a panacea for all the educational problems facing Hispanic students. For the most part, each school must concern itself with the resolution of its own specific problems (Schubert, 1980). Every school should be considered unique, and educators should choose among research-based practices and programs according to the needs of the Hispanic students that they serve. Critical out-of-school factors that influence the outcomes of schooling for Hispanic students must also be addressed. If we focus only on school factors and ignore the importance of family and community influences in the education of Hispanic students, we clearly fail in our endeavors. As E. E. García (2001) wrote, "an optimal learning community for Hispanic student populations recognizes that academic learning has its roots in both out-of-school and in-school processes" (p. 239).

Improving the education of Hispanic students, however, will take more than just an awareness of the problems and knowledge of solutions. It will require the concerted efforts of all educators to respond to this crisis by insisting on immediate attention and accepting no more excuses (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). It will require a call to action and collaboration among teachers and administrators; university professors, deans, and presidents; parents and students; and the government. This process will also require a change in attitudes to make educators aware of the severity of the problems facing Hispanic students and seriously committed to reversing the cycle of educational failure among these students in our schools.

Note

[1] While this chapter specifically focuses on Hispanic students, some of the reports, studies, and articles reviewed use a variety of terms like immigrant students, English language learners (ELLs), language-minority students, and limited English proficient students (LEPs). Similarly, the term Latino is often used interchangeably with the term Hispanic in the literature. For purposes of this chapter, we have tried to consistently use the term, Hispanic, but we have carefully tried not to misrepresent the literature cited.

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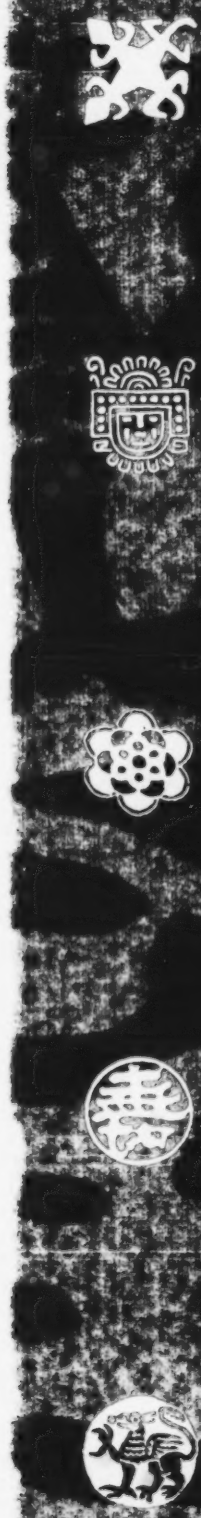

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